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The Development Of "A Cappella" Music
As An Educational Element In The United States

THE DEVELOPMENT OF "A CAPPELLA" MUSIC AS AN
EDUCATIONAL ELEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

BY

OLLIVE MYRTLE MENELEY

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THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

Olive Myrtle Meneley

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF "A CAPELLA" MUSIC AS AN EDUCATIONAL ELEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES.

Church music as it exists today is a result of a long process of evolution. Altho this process has been continuous, three times it has culminated in special forms, all of which concur with three extensive ideas of musical expression that have followed each other chronologically, and which divide the whole history of modern music into clearly marked epochs. These epochs are: first, the period of unison chant which extends from the founding of the congregation of Rome to about the year 1100; second, the period of the unaccompanied contrapuntal chorus, extending from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, and culminating in the works of Palestrina and his contemporaries; and third, the epoch of the mixed solo and chorus with instrumental accompaniment, which is the style now dominant in the church choir music. It is the "a capella" or unaccompanied contrapuntal chorus which has been neglected, and in which we are interested.

About the eleventh century, the new principles of harmony were first carefully investigated. This important step marked the beginning of part writing; and also made music a free art, having its laws of rhythm and structure no longer identical with those of language. From the desire to unite two or more parts together in perfect freedom arose the second great school of church music, which, being independent of instrumental accompaniment, developed



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along vocal lines, and terminated in the contrapuntal chorus music which attained its perfection in the last half of the sixteenth century.

The church song was an outcome of the religious enthusiasm which prevailed during the period of vigorous intellectual activity of the Middle Ages. This enthusiasm, the absence of an operatic stage and concert system, and a very small musical public all combined to make the musical composer of that time devote the greater part of his energies toward the writing of church music. The choral song that was developed during this period was permeated with a simplicity, calmness, and trust which gave a charm common to all mediaeval art, but which now seems to be lost forever from the human creative intellect. At first the songs were extremely strange, simple, barbaric forms of music. The earliest divergence from unison singing was separating the voices by octaves and fourths or octaves and fifths, or the voices progressed in parallel, oblique, and sometimes contrary motion. This style of singing was called organum or diaphony, and was attributed to several different sources, but it was probably a survival of an old form used among the Greeks and Romans.

A freer style of writing arose from the organum called discant (Latin discantus), in the year 1100. This was at first an irregular mixture of octaves, unisons, fourths, and fifths, with an occasional third as a variator from the older form. Parallel fourths and fifths were used for some time, but finally were discarded as sounding "hollow and unsatisfying", and the principle of contrary motion, which is the essence of modern harmony and counter-

point, was gradually employed. In the combining of tones the composer had no thought of using chords, this was a much later discovery. Instead, he used separate melodies and put them together. These melodies were usually borrowed. The principle theme or "cantus firmus" might be taken from a sacred song and the melodic second theme or counterpoint might be a secular song. Sometimes the words of the sacred song would be used in both voices, but frequently the secular words would be sung in one part, and the sacred in another. Some musicians found this two-part discant so satisfactory that they tried adding a third part. This practice helped to do away with so much borrowing of thematic material, because it was seldom that three themes could be found to combine satisfactorily, but the composer invariably borrowed his cantus firmus.

As the writing of these contrapuntal devices progressed, they became less simple and harsh. Instead of the old note against note method of writing, several notes of counterpoint would appear against one in the cantus firmus. The continuous succession of notes was broken by rests. In the twelfth century thirds and sixths were freely used; dissonances resolved to consonances; consecutive fifths were avoided; the counterpoint was varied by embellishing and passing notes; and double counterpoint and imitation were introduced. In the thirteenth century music was still a matter of technique. A system of notation to indicate time value and pitches was evolved. Writing music continued to be a laborious proposition in the fourteenth century, but the constant solving of these preliminary problems pointed to a future mastery of the art. There was a constant struggle to keep all of the voices moving,

which was difficult to do with such a large number of parts. None of the voices were subordinated; all possessed the same degree of importance - therefore the term polyphonic which means many voiced.

When writing in two or more parts became fairly simple and satisfactory, music developed a new form, which was called a canon, or writing in imitation. One voice took the lead and after a certain interval, another voice would come in repeating what the first voice had done, and so on with a third and sometimes a fourth voice. These canons were often quite complex.

The next step in the development of music was the devising of a system of notation by which time values as well as differences in pitch could be determined. Square headed notes were finally arranged on a staff of lines and spaces, but there were many clef signs used, and they had no stationary place on the staff, so that reading music was almost as complex and bewildering a task as writing it. The singers did not often sing just the notes that were written, they would decorate it to suit themselves. These adornments were sometimes thought out previously with care, but quite often they were extemporized on the spur of the moment, and the result was often unsatisfactory.

The art of counterpoint was first cultivated in Northern France and Flanders. King Robert of France was a pious supporter and composer of church music. Louis IX also wrote canons and church songs. During the One Hundred Years' War, musicians were carefully taken care of in France while they taught counterpoint all over Europe. Dufay was one of the founders of the Flemish school of composers, during the first half of the fifteenth

century, and some of his masses are still preserved. In the second half of this century Okenheim was the most distinguished musician. Many of his works remain in manuscript. The leader of a later group of Flemish composers, and a pupil of Okenheim was de Près who wrote a large collection of sacred music including the motets "Portio mea non est in terra viventium" and "Bonitatem fecisti cum servo tuo, Domine". The last predominant musician of the Netherlands was Orlando di Lassus, during the last half of the sixteenth century. He did much for the progress of musical development. The number of works composed by him was enormous, amounting to 1572 sacred pieces, besides secular. These great masters spread their learning by founding schools at different places. Some of their noteworthy scholars were Pierre de la Rue, Brumel, Jannequin, Mouton, Arcadelb, Verdelot, Gombert, de Monte, Waelrent, Claude le Jeune, and Willaert.

The polyphonic music of the Netherland school was perfected in the style of their Roman contemporaries, which was known as the "Palestrina style". Two distinct modes of treatment were used. First, "the intricate texture and solidity of Netherland work; and second, the 'familiar style', in which the voices move together in equal steps, without canonic imitations." A combination of these two modes was used in the larger works. Altho the parts move along at equal distances, in the familiar style, the implied principle is melodic in all the voices, not harmonic. This style, however, is a remote anticipation of the modern harmonic feeling.

From the Netherlands the musical center shifted to Italy and somewhat to Germany. Giovanni Pierluigi, better known as Palestrina after the name of the town from which he came, was the Italian

who pushed counterpoint to artistic perfection. It has been improving constantly thru the work of Palestrina. His life and numerous works were thoroly saturated with a devout religious zeal. His contemporaries at Rome were such men as Vittoria, Marenzio, the Anerios, and the Naninis, whose work was in the same style as Palestrina, and together they form the "Roman School", or "Palestrina School".

Palestrina has been called the "savior of church music", because at one time, it is said that the Council of Trent had strong intentions of banishing from the church all chorus music, on account of some objectionable features it had acquired, and returning to the old unison chant. Pope Marcellus II suspended the judgement until Palestrina could produce a work that should reconcile the claims of religion and art. Palestrina succeeded in composing a mass that was the highest type of unaccompanied vocal music, and at the same time the most devotional and expressive piece that had ever been written. It was called the Mass of Pope Marcellus, and was performed before a commission of cardinals who received it enthusiastically. This work remains as a model of all that religious music should be. As a result of his successful mass, Palestrina was made composer to the choir of the Sistine Chapel. This organization carried the practice of "a cappella" music to the highest degree of excellence, and was highly admired by all musicians.

There were, however, some abuses in church music that needed correction during this period. The borrowing of secular themes for sacred songs, especially when the secular words used were

objectionable. Other church songs did not faithfully represent the true purpose of worship music. But the most objectionable feature to church music was the complaint that the words could not be understood. The counterpoint was so elaborate and one word stretched over so many different notes that it was impossible to follow and understand the singer. Church music was probably at about this stage when Palestrina wrote his model mass.

At first thot, it may seem strange that church music remained so pure and sincere when at the same time the head of the Catholic church was becoming so wordly and sensuous, and there was so much political and intellectual turmoil going on outside. But Palestrina and his devout contemporaries were so engrossed in their work within the church that they were not agitated by the political and doctrinal disturbances without.

At this time Germany was not as much of a musical center as at a later period, but there were several remarkable writers there. Among the earliest musicians of eminence, we find a contemporary of de Phe's, Heinrich Isaak, who composed many important masses, motets, and part songs. Jakob Händl was a later choir master who was one of the best German contrapuntists of his day. Many people class Hans Leo Hassler, who was educated in Italy, with di Lassus and Palestrina, on account of his enterprising and influential genius.

On account of geographical conditions, England developed the art of contrapuntal writing almost entirely alone, with notable success. Some of those responsible for this musical progress were Tallis, who composed a mass and a number of motets, including one

that was for eight five voiced-choirs; Tye composed a passion, masses, and motets, including "Jesum Nazarenum"; and Byrd, of a later period, who is remembered especially for his canon "Non nobis Domine".

There is an immense difference between the music of the composers of the sixteenth century and that of the present time. The principle reason for this is that each type is built upon an entirely different harmonic system. The material that the mediaevalists had to work with was not plastic. It was difficult to get much variation in color from their keys, as there were no chromatics except B flat. (Their modes included only the notes represented by the white keys of the pianoforte, including B flat). They knew nothing of chords, key relationships, or modulation, which are familiar to the musician of the present day. But as time went on, composers worked out the difficulties of harmony and composition; thus the material with which they had to work became more responsive, and "a cappella" music progressed.

By 1650, when the new zeal for dramatic music was absorbing the best attention of both musicians and public, the Palestrina style with its strict "a cappella" effects is said to have entirely ceased, but there were still a few faithful students of Palestrina, especially in Rome, who continued to keep this pure form of church music alive during this period. Cifra was one who composed numerous and excellent works including masses, motets and psalms. Allegri was another whose motet, "Miserere", for nine voices in two choirs was most famous. Agostini wrote motets, masses and psalms involving great contrapuntal skill, and sometimes using as many as forty-eight voices. Other learned poly-

phonic composers of Rome, during this transition period, were Benevoli, Simonelli, and Pitoni.

In spite of the efforts of the few conservatives, the drift toward secular music, as well as secularized sacred music, was overwhelming. In Italy and France during the seventeenth century, the opera and oratorio were extremely popular, at the expense of sacred music. In England the opera was slightly influenced by the "masque", a literary play with incidental music.

The pure Palestrina style was never dominant in Germany, altho it had its solitary disciples there. Church music was not as neglected there as elsewhere. Schutz, of Dresden, was the ablest German composer of the century, and practically all of his works were sacred. He did much for the development of the church cantata and oratorio, which prefigures the nobler work of the following century.

German church music culminated in the eighteenth century, under the unsurpassed genius of Johann Sebastian Bach. Besides the large number of cantatas, oratorios, and Passions of renown, Bach composed a great many motets in the old-time dignified type of unaccompanied church music. A few of his polyphonic motets for double choruses are: "Be not afraid", "Jesus Precious Saviour", "Come, Jesus, come", "Jesus Priceless Treasure", and "Sei Lob und Preis mit Ehren".

Some other sacred "a cappella" music that was composed on the continent during this period and is still extant is: "Protexisti me, Deus", a motet by Durdante; "Cioe Tutta in Canone", a mass by G. Fux; several choruses by Weimar, including "The Daughter of

Zion"; Lottis' "Crucifixus", for double choir, and another setting for ten voices; Scarlatti's "Tu es Petrus", for double chorus; and "Miserere mei Deus", a psalm by Pergolesi.

In England, after 1760, there was a conspicuous outburst of secular music, taking the form of light operas, part-songs, glees, and catches. The catch was originally a canon. The glee or unaccompanied part-song recalled somewhat the madrigal period of the sixteenth century. This type of writing attracted many church composers, who produced admirable works. Two of the most prolific church musicians who wrote glees were Thomas Attwood and William Shield.

The artistic cultivation of part songs was much stimulated, in 1761, by the organization of the "Catch Club", which is still in existence. The majority of the renowned glee-writers were members of this. A similar organization was the Glee Club; founded in 1787 and disbanded in 1857. The singing of the Glee Club was restricted to unaccompanied part-songs. Favorite glee-writers prior to 1800 were: S. Webb and son, B. Cooke and son, J. S. Smith, W. Hayes and son, the Earl of Mornington, J. Battishill, and J. W. Callcott.

In 1798, a society called the Conventores Sodales was founded in England, to promote practice and production of "a cappella" music. It became extinct in 1847. The most influential composers in reviving glee music during this period were T. Attwood, J. Clark, and G. Smart. Other less important men who worked principally in sacred music were: T. Greatorex, W. Horsley, H. R. Bishop, and W. Hawes. Secular composers were T. S. Cooke, T. Walmisley,

W. Beale, and the Earl of Westmoreland. The old line of glee writers was successfully prolonged, during the last half of the nineteenth century, by R. Pearsall, J. Coward, J. Knight, and H. D. Leslie. The latter was the untiring director of a famous chorus for "a cappella" singing.

Other famous European composers who wrote a limited amount of "a cappella" music, and some of their representative works, during the nineteenth century; were: A. Scarlatti, a mass in E minor; G. Perti, a motet, "Adoramus te, Christe"; another motet, "Memento, Domine, David", by D. Scarlatti; Haydn wrote a Passion motet; Weber "Ein Gärtchen und ein Hauschen drin"; Cherubine, "The Credo"; S. Wesley, a quartet, "Father of Light"; Beethoven, "Gesang der Mouche"; Brahms, twelve songs and romances for female chorus, three songs for chorus, and an eight part chorus, "Fest und Gedenkeprüche"; Auber, "Masaniello", Meyerbeer, seven sacred cantatas of Kloptock for four voices, a Serenade, "Braut geleite aus der Heimath", and twelve psalms for double chorus; Mendelssohn, "Lord have mercy upon us"; Cornelius wrote a Christmas motet; Saint-Saens, a double male chorus, "Les Soldats de Gédion", and two male choruses, "Saltarella", and "Les Guerriers"; Max Bruch wrote five songs for choir, Op. 38; and Rimsky-Korsakov composed six "a cappella" choruses, Op. 16.

In America, there has been a relatively small amount of work done in "a cappella" music either by composers or performers. From investigations of fourteen of the most important music publishers there was only one concern that edited a list of choruses suited for unaccompanied singing. Yet if there was a greater demand for

their works, composers would probably be glad to contribute to this type of music, but at present only a few people seem to have realized its value.

In most communities of fairly good size there are organized glee clubs of male or female voices, usually in connection with a Y.W.C.A. or Y.M.C.A. or University. Quite frequently they render good programmes of "a cappella" music, but sometimes they have to resort to a poor class of songs. The standard of the glee club would be inevitably raised by the use of good part-songs. Numerous part-songs available at the present time are written in Latin, German, or Italian, and the ordinary group of singers is not expected to be able to sing in all of the different foreign languages. However, when there is an evident desire for this class of music the demand will undoubtedly be met with.

Even in the Music Schools and Conservatories where there is available material for "a cappella" singing there is comparatively little use made of it. Out of seventy catalogs of the leading Schools of Music and Conservatories examined, there were only two that made any mention whatsoever of work being done in unaccompanied singing. One contained the following interesting statements:

"Seven years ago the A CAPPELLA CHOIR was formed for the purpose of studying and performing unaccompanied choral music of various styles and periods. Its membership consisted then of but fourteen singers but it soon set standards of choral performances that are rarely attained and in consequence it achieved an enviable reputation. Since then its membership has gradually increased until during the past season it has reached the maximum number of thirty voices. This number permits the choir for the first time to effectively perform music which is written in eight vocal parts. Two notable compositions of this class have been specialized in on recent programs, Mendelssohn's noble motette, "Judge Me, O God," and Lotti's remarkable setting of the "Crucifixus," which is one of the finest examples of medieval church music. Among the interesting modern numbers added to the Choir's repertoire

are Coleridge-Taylor's dramatic part-song "The Lee Shore" and a "Chorus of Villagers" from Borodin's opera of Prince Igor. This latter was sung with much success at the recent Festival.

"The A CAPPELLA CHOIR is an organization of advanced vocal students for the performance of unaccompanied choral music, especially that of the great mediaeval masters such as Palestrina, Orlando di Lasso, Bach and others. In tone quality, balance of parts, purity of intonation, and artistic interpretation, the choir aims at the highest possible standards. The work performed has been such as to attract the favorable comment of the most exacting critics.

"The choir is composed of a small body of picked voices rehearsing twice weekly. The piano is not used at rehearsals, and the singers thus become expert in accuracy of intonation, and develop a feeling for absolute pitch. The experience to be gained in this organization is invaluable to the prospective soloist or quartette singer. A no less important function of the choir is to bring before the public a class of music of extreme beauty, which is rarely performed, but which demands unusual finish and sympathetic interpretation to make it really effective."

"THE A CAPPELLA CHOIR"

"During the past eight years the A CAPPELLA CHOIR has sung the following compositions:

Popule meus)	
Gloria Patri)	
Adoramus te Christe	)	..... Palestrina
Tu es Petrus)	
Tenebrae factae sunt)	
O Bone Jesu)	
Kommt mein Gespons	)	..... Orlando di Lasso
Matona, lovely Maiden))	
Jesu dulcis memoria		..... Vittoria
Exultate Deo		..... Scarlatti
Selection from Motette, "Jesu, Priceless Treasure"		..... Bach
O Villanella		..... Claude le Jeune
Down in a Flowery Vale		..... Festa
Lo, Now a Rose e'er Blooming		..... Praetorius
Kyrie eleison		..... 12th Century Plain Song
O Filii et Filiae		..... Ancient Hymn-tune
Sumer is icumen in		..... Ancient English Round
Since First I saw Your Face		..... Thomas Ford
Now is the Month of Maying		..... Thomas Morley
God be in my head		..... Davies
Alla trinita beata		..... Traditional Hymn
Come, Dorothy, Come		..... Swabian Folksong
The Keel Row		..... Border Folksong
Charlie Is My Darling		..... Old Scotch Folksong
Caller Herrin'		..... Scotch Folk Song

Dalekarlien Dance (Harken, Gentle Maiden)	Swedish Folksong
Ar hyd y nos	Welsh Folksong
Brunette	17th Century French
Listen Lordings Unto Me	English Traditional
Cradle Song. Edited by Franz Wuellner	German Folksong
Silent, O Moyle, Be the Sound of Thy Waters	Old Irish
Presentation of Christ in the Temple	Johann Eccard
Amor im Nachen	Gastoldi
Creation's Hymn	Beethoven
Quando corpus (Stabat Mater)	Rossini
Ave Verum	Gounod
All Among the Barley	Elizabeth Stirling
On High the Stars Now are Shining	Rheinberger
Hunting Song (Rise, Sleep No More)	Benedict
God So Loved the World (Crucifixion)	Stainer
The Waits	Saville
O Gladsome Light	Sullivan
So Happy in Thine House	O. Thomas
You Stole My Love	Macfarren
Lord, for Thy Tender Mercy's Sake	Farrant
Sleep, Holy Babe	J.B. Dykes
O Savior of the World	John Goss
The Mellow Eve is Gliding	A.J. Holden
God is a Spirit	Bennett
Full Fathom Five	Wood
Corydon Arise (Six Elizabethan Pastorals))	C.V. Stanford
Sweet Love for Me (Six Elizabethan Pastorals))	
The Lover's Counsel)	Cowen
Spring)	
Evening (Intermezzo)	Lasseu
Two Lovers	Hecht
A Legend)	Tschaikowsky
Hymn to the Trinity)	
Pater Noster)	
Cherubim Song)	
Farwell to Summer	Brahms
Where'er I Go	Brahms
Music, When Soft Voices Die	Dickinson
Sunrise	Taneyef
'Round the Good Father's Door	Arkhangelsky
Around Us Hear the Sounds of Even	Dvorak
A Joyful Christmas Song)	Gevaert
The Magi Kings)	
Sleep of the Child Jesus	Gevaert
From Lyons as I Journeyed	Gevaert
Christmas Song (Three Kings Have Journeyed)	Cornelius
Three Old Bohemian Christmas Carols	Carl Riedel
Night Whispers	W. von Moellendorff
Ave maria stella	Grieg
The Brook)	MacDowell
Northern Slumber Song)	
Come, Sleep	Alfred G. Wathall
Serenade (with 'Cello obligato)	Arenski
Awake, Awake)	Granville Bantock
On Himalay)	

As Torrents in Summer (King Olaf)	Edward Elgar
Northwestern University Hymn (Quaecumque sunt vera)	Haydn-Lutkin
Choral Blessing (The Lord Bless You)	}
The Day is Past and Over	
I Will Sing of Thy Power	
Child Jesus Comes from Heavenly Height	
Like as a Father Pitieth His Children	}
Night Song	
There's a Song in the Air	
I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes	
O Paradise, O Paradise	}
Cargoes	
I Will Weave You a Rhyme	
A Song of St. Francis	
Noel	}
At Christmas-tyde	
Thou Did'st Leave Thy Throne	
The De'il's Awa'	
Bubbles	Grant-Schaefer
Glory to the Father	Powell
Cherubic Hymn	Delamarter
A Sacred Dialogue	Weidig
In Going to My Lonely Bed	Rachmaninoff
O Can Ye Sew Cushions	Gretchaninoff
How Eloquent Are Eyes	Becker
Judge Me, O God (eight parts)	Richard Edwards
Crucifixus	Arr. by Bantock
In Fields Abroad	John E. West
Awake, Sweet Love	Mendelssohn
The Lee Shore	Lotti
My Bonnie Lass	William Byrd
Chorus of Villagers, from "Prince Igor"	John Dowland
Evening on the Sava	Coleridge-Taylor
	Edw. German
	Borodin
	Serbian Folk Song

Upon more careful investigation, by letter, of twenty-five of the largest and most efficient of these Music Schools and Conservatories, regarding the nature of the work, if any, being done in "a cappella" music, eight made no reply. This silence would naturally lead one to draw the conclusion that they had nothing favorable to report. Of the other schools, six admitted that they were doing nothing in this style of music, and three enthusiastic ones said they had done a little in the past, and hoped to take it up again sometime in the future. There were eight schools, that were actively engaged in the performance of

"a cappella" singing. These spoke unanimously of the value of such training, and agreed that it put a chorus to the most stringent test, and when well directed was one of the finest forms of vocal music. Mr. Mees says, "It cannot be too often repeated that to study and listen to the performance of polyphonic works of the highest type afford the surest and quickest means of developing musical intelligence."

Obviously, unaccompanied choral music, particularly for mixed voices, has been almost entirely neglected. There is a vast number of desirable voices for "a cappella" choirs being unused, and these capable ones are, in many cases, unconsciously losing the opportunity for a more thorough and exacting musical training which is their due, and which they would receive thru unaccompanied chorus singing. This is the most effective means for the attainment of good part-singing, and should be cultivated if for no other purpose than to raise the standard of choral technic. This alone should be of sufficient importance to conductors of musical organizations to cause them to interest themselves in "a cappella" music. When performers show, by using the excellent works of the mediaevalists, that they desire the best in "a cappella" music, modern composers will contribute accordingly.

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